

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 0786

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SHUM, PINS, SREF, AR
SUBJECT: AMB DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS, RIGHT OF OPTION AND
BEAGLE CHANNEL WITH DEP FONMIN ALLARA

SUMMARY: ANTICIPATED FIREWORKS FAILED TO MATERIALIZE AT
JAN 30 PRIVATE LUNCHEON WITH DEP. FONMIN ALLARA AT EMBASSY
LUNCHEON. MY LEADING QUESTIONS FAILED TO JAR ALLARA'S
COMPOSURE AS WE DISCUSSED HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER SENSITIVE
TOPICS. HE ASSERTED THAT THE RIGHT OF OPTION PROGRAM IS TO
BE VIGOROUSLY CARRIED OUT BY GOA AND DENIED THAT MASSERA'S
DIFFERENCES WITH VIDELA ARE SIGNIFICANT. END SUMMARY

1. MISSING NUNS AND MOTHERS: AVOIDING SUBLETIES, I TOLD
DEP FONMIN THAT CONSENSUS IN DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND AMONG
PRIVATE ARGENTINES WAS THAT KIDNAPPING OF FRENCH NUNS AND
PLAZA DE MAYO MOTHERS WAS CARRIED OUT BY A GOA AGENCY.
THERE WAS NO OUTBURST FROM ALLARA AND HE SAID HE CONCLUDED
SAME THING. AS AN EXCULPATORY NOTE, ALLARA SAID PROBABLY
SOME BUMBLING LOW-GRADE OFFICER WAS BEHIND KIDNAPPING, FOR IT
WAS NOT AN OFFICIALLY APPROVED GOA PROJECT. ON BEING ASKED,
ALLARA REFUSED TO SPECULATE ON WHICH MIGHT BE THE GUILTY GOA
AGENCY. I SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT THIS EPISODE COULD BE
THE STRAW THAT BREAKS THE CAMEL'S BACK WITH REGARD TO
USG/GOA RELATIONS. I EMPHASIZED MY GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN
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OVER LACK OF PROGRESS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD. HIS
RESPONSE WAS LIMITED TO SAYING THAT GOA WAS TRYING ITS
BEST BUT HAVING PROBLEMS WITH THE MEDDLING OF A FEW
HARD-LINE MILITARY UNITS WHICH HE FAILED TO IDENTIFY.

2. JACOBO TIMERMAN CASE: WHEN I TOLD ALLARA THAT I HAD
BEEN REPEATEDLY ADVISED IN THE US THAT ARGENTINA WAS

ANTI-SEMITIC, HIS STOICISM YIELDED A BIT. HE BECAME DEFENSIVE, SAYING THAT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ARGENTINA LOVED THE COUNTRY. I REMINDED ALLARA THAT WHEN I MADE MY ROUNDS TO MEET MEMBERS OF THE JUNTA, CABINET MEMBERS AND KEY MILITARY LEADERS, THE TIMERMAN CASE HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT LENGTH. DURING THESE CALLS I WAS LED TO FOR THE IMPRESSION THAT TIMERMAN WOULD BE RELEASED DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS-WHICH DID NOT TAKE PLACE. CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN THIS CASE WAS HEAVY AND INCREASING. ALLARA RESPONDED THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT A SOLUTION TO THE TIMERMAN CASE WOULD BE REACHED SOON. I TOLD HIM THAT THIS WAS MORE OF THE "PROMISES PROMISES" I HAD BEEN HEARING BEFORE, BUT WITHOUT ACTION. HE REPEATED THAT A SOLUTION WOULD BE FOUND SOON; PERHAPS TIMERMAN WOULD BE RELEASED FROM THE P.E.N. AND TURNED OVER TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM. I SAID THIS WOULD BE "DOUBLE JEOPARDY" SINCE TIMERMAN HAD BEEN ACQUITTED BY A MILITARY TRIBUNAL AND IT WOULD BE SEEN AS AN UNJUDICIAL AND UNSOPHISTICATED ACT WHICH WOULD GIVE ARGENTINA A BARBARIC IMAGE ABROAD. ALLARA SAID HE WAS NOT PRIVY TO ALL DETAILS IN THE TIMERMAN CASE, BUT THAT SOMETHING WAS IN THE WIND.

3. DEUTSCH, VOGLER AND RUS CASES: I MENTIONED, IN GENERAL TERMS, THE CASES OF DEUTSCH FAMILY, VOGLER AND RUS. ALLARA WAS FAMILIAR WITH THEM. I EXPLAINED THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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THESE WERE HIGH INTEREST CASES IN THE EYES OF THE USG, CONGRESS AND THE WORLD. HE COMMENTED THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THEY WERE ALL JEWISH. HE AFFIRMED THAT HE AND FONMIN MONTES WERE SYMPATHETIC TOWARD ALL THESE CASES, BUT COULD NOT PREVAIL AGAINST THE PRESSURE OF A FEW MILITARY HARD-LINERS.

4. RIGHT OF OPTION: THE TOPIC OF THE RIGHT OF OPTION SEEMED TO AGREE WITH ALLARA. HE IMMEDIATELY TOOK THE INITIATIVE, STATING THAT THE GOA COULD NOT SUPPORT ITS CURRENT PRISON POPULATION. HE SAID THEY WERE READY TO RELEASE AS MANY PRISONERS AS POSSIBLE UNDER THE RIGHT OF OPTION PROGRAM AND EMPHASIZED THEY WANTED MORE EMBASSIES TO ISSUE CERTIFICATES (GUARANTEEING ENTRY INTO A FOREIGN COUNTRY) SO THE PROGRAM COULD BE IMPLEMENTED SPEEDILY.

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HE SAID FONOFF WILL FURNISH EMBASSIES WITH ANY AND ALL BACKGROUND INFO THEY NEED ON A PRISONER. HE CONCLUDED BY PLEADING THAT ALL COUNTRIES ACCEPTING RIGHT OF OPTION CASES SHOULD MONITOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE INDIVIDUALS AT THEIR DESTINATIONS. ALLARA SAID HE FEARED MANY POCKETS OF SUBVERSION WERE BEING FORMED IN KEY CAPITALS OF THE WORLD. THIS HE FELT COULD BE AVOIDED BY SURVEILLANCE ON THE PART OF THE HOST COUNTRY.

5. BEAGLE STRAITS: ALLARA PROPHESED THAT THE BEAGLE STRAITS DIFFERENCES WOULD BE RESOLVED TO THE SATISFACTION OF CHILE AND ARGENTINA. HE DISPLAYED NO CONCERN OVER THE TOPIC.

6. TIMES AND POST STORIES: ON BEING ASKED IF HE HAD READ RECENT STORIES IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST, ALLARA SAID HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE CONTENTS OF BOTH. THE TIMES STORY'S THRUST WAS THE LACK OF PROGRESS BY THE GOA IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS. HE CHARACTERIZED JUAN DE ONIS, AUTHOR OF THE TIMES STORY, AS AN ARCH ENEMY OF ARGENTINA AND INCAPABLE OF OBJECTIVITY. HE VIGOROUSLY DENIED THE WASHINGTON POST STORY'S CONTENTION THAT MASSERA AND VIDELA ARE ON THE POINT OF SPLIT. HE REPEATED IT WAS WIDELY KNOWN THAT MASSERA HAD HONEST DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITH THE PRESIDENT, AND THESE DIFFERENCES WOULD NOT MERIT BEING CALLED ACRIMONIOUS
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DEBATE. HE DID NOT FORESEE A REAL SPLIT NOR A CHANGE OF THE CURRENT GOA.

7. COMMENT: ALLARA PROPOSED THAT WE GET TOGETHER FOR LUNCHEON. HE SEEMED MORE SUBDUED THAN USUAL AND I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS TAKING SOUNDINGS OF MY OPINION

ABOUT ADMIRAL MASSERA AS A POTENTIAL LEADER. ALLARA
IMPRESSED ME THAT GOA IS, IN FACT, READY TO MOVE AHEAD
TO MAKE THIS PROGRAM A REALITY. HE OFFERED HIS FULL
PERSONAL COOPERATION ON ANY PROBLEM I HAD TO RAISE WITH
THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND ASKED THAT I CALL HIM DIRECTLY.
HE DID HIS BEST TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION WITH ME THAT THE
ARGENTINE NAVY OFFERS ITS FULL COOPERATION TO THE UNITED
STATES AND, AFTER ALL, THE FOREIGN OFFICE IS NAVY
CONTROLLED.
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